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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the theoretical basis of elementary social studies curriculum. Using a categorization tool developed by Eisner and Vallance, the author examines recent elementary school social studies literature in order to determine the underlying of curriculum philosophies. Five philosophical positions are revealed. The first, academic rationalism, is a content-focused curriculum. This theory implies that the knowledge that has been revealed to man through the ages is the content the student must learn. The second, cognitive processes, is concerned with the skills of intellectual operations which focus on the processes of learning and thinking. The third, social reconstruction-relevance, views education as the means of creating a better society and views the school's role as an agency of adaption. The fourth, curriculum as technology, focuses on the processes involved with producing a more efficient means of teaching. The fifth, self-actualizing curriculum, provides personally satisfying experiences so that a better understanding of the student and world becomes possible.
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DETERMINING THE CURRICULAR CONCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

Research Report

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Background of the Study

Authors of the literature on curriculum development in the social studies usually neglect to identify the theoretical basis upon which their proposals for curriculum are built. In one recent book on social studies methods, Joyce[1] discusses: intellectual education--using analytical ideas and problem solving tools to solve social problems; social education--the content and procedures involved in preparing a child to live in society; and personal education--through an examination of cultures and societies, the child can understand his life and find meaning in it.

The difficulty with this specific delineation is that it assumes a content rather than purpose focused. In other words, as in the case of many programs, it explains the selection of content rather than focusing upon the over-all purposes of social studies education.

An example may be helpful. The recent social studies reform began in 1963. At that time, this researcher was working as a graduate assistant at Northwestern University. My assigned task was the identification of the model of curriculum development which was being used by the national curriculum projects conceptualized by followers of Jerome Bruner. The spirit of the times seemed to be, develop curriculum and don't worry about theoretical models which explain purposes. After all, models explain only what happens; they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.

It wasn't until 1968 that this researcher developed the model shown below. A verbal description of a similar model was published by King[3] in 1969. A careful analysis of this model was developed from

The Process of Education[4] showing that Bruner's ideas were prescriptive although they were not nearly as rigidly defined as some of his interpreters would have us believe. The Brunerian Model, as illustrated in Figure 1, begins with the structure of knowledge, defined by the scholars, as its content base. This knowledge is then translated by professional educators into materials for children. The educators are encouraged to take into account the intellectual development of the student and to consider the acts of learning. Bloom's taxonomy is often used here. The resultant ideas are carefully sequenced into a spiral curriculum so that a learner reencounters important concepts at different levels of difficulty throughout his learning experience.

This Brunerian Model is a curriculum planning model. It makes no statement as to a theory of curriculum. The model makes no statement about educational goals or purposes. This is common of the curriculum work in the 60's. There was little concern about a philosophy of curriculum. In fact, it was common for advocates of curriculum change in the 60's to answer questions about philosophies by saying that they were implicit in the materials produced and they need not be stated explicitly. This failure to state philosophic positions continues in the literature of social studies a decade later. Persons writing in social studies rarely examine their conception as to the purposes of social studies education. Therefore, they have difficulty selecting content, defining the acts of learning they expect (the level of the Bloom's taxonomy at which they expect the child to function), and determining the strategies which accomplish their purposes most effectively.

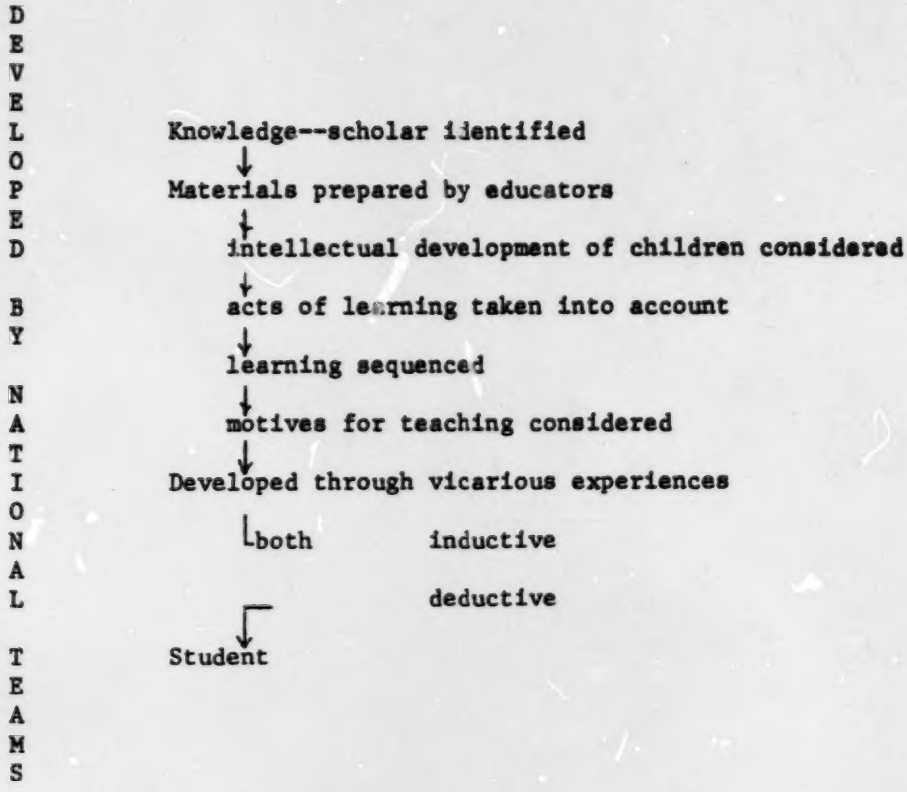

Figure 1. Alternative Curriculum Model

The Problem and Procedure

The problem upon which the study focuses is to determine what theoretic conceptions of curriculum are being advocated by social studies educators. The purpose of this study was to determine what theoretical conceptions of curriculum were implied by elementary social studies educators. Fulfillment of this purpose required the identification of a categorization tool or construct upon which this curriculum could be analyzed. Eisner and Vallance[5] described five orientations to curriculum: cognitive processes approach, curriculum as technology, curriculum for self-actualization and consummatory experiences, academic rationalism, and curriculum for social reconstruction-relevance.

The Eisner and Vallance construct is useful because of its succinctness. It defines the conceptualization of cognitive processes as the approach concerned with the refinement of intellectual operations focusing on the processes of learning and thinking——the development of a set of skills. The curriculum as technology approach focuses on process also, but these processes are involved with producing a more efficient means of teaching. This conceptualization is based on the idea that learning occurs in systematic, predictable ways. To improve teaching and learning one merely needs to find what the student needs to know, develop an efficient system of delivery, and systematically organize the student's sequence of experiences.

The self-actualizing curriculum focuses on content. This content, however, allows the liberation of the individual. It views the curriculum as a means of providing personally satisfying consummatory experiences for each individual learner so that a better understanding of

himself and his world becomes possible. The academic rationalist conceptualization is a content focused curriculum also, but its interest is the academic disciplines. The knowledge that has been revealed to man through the ages is the content the student must learn. Persons maintaining this position feel that knowledge is important for the sake of knowledge.

The social reconstruction-relevance view has two basic divisions. The first views education as the means of creating a better society and takes a society focus; the second views the role of the school as an agency of adaptation, having the individual see a role for himself in the functioning society, an individual focus.

Using these categories as criteria the researcher analyzed the literature of elementary social studies education to determine the theoretical positions taken by the leaders of elementary social studies.

Related Literature

There have been five recent analysis which require review. Oliver[6] categorized five areas of instruction in social education as the "wisdom approach" which dealt with the transmission of knowledge in the social studies; "social science disciplines approach" which teaches the student the methods and conceptions of scholarship; the "harmonist approach" which helps the student grow with a minimum of frustration, the "image of greatness approach" which provides the young with inspiring symbols illustrating basic human problems and the cultural solutions of our society; the "jurisprudential approach" bridging the gap between knowledge and value conflicts; and the "civic action approach" combining knowledge and action to promote civic competence.

Brubaker[7] writing at the apogee of the revision era saw two purposes: "citizenship" which he felt was the major purpose of social studies, at least at the secondary level; this approach dealt with values, critical thinking, and the relationship between the two. A second purpose, a minority one was "social science inquiry" which used the principles of the social sciences and their methods of inquiry. Barth and Shermis[8] three years later relabelled Brubaker's areas and added a third. Their most recent Barr, Barth and Shermis[9] is merely a restatement. The first was "social studies as citizenship" intended to transmit the traits of a good citizen through description and persuasion from content developed on the past or from the predictions of authorities. The second category "social studies as social science" was identified as knowledge for the sake of knowledge; the processes used were those of the social scientists. The third area was "social studies as reflective inquiry" which defined citizenship as a process as apposed to eatablished values; here the teacher working with her students identified and presented solutions to problems; the content of this tradtition was interdisciplinary and depended upon inquiry.

In 1972, Joyce[10] published a three category description; "social education", preparing the child to participate effectively in the dynamic life of his society; "intellectual education", acquiring the analytical ideas and problem solving tools developed by scholars in the social sciences; and "personal education", helping the child comprehend his experience and find meaning in his life.

Brubaker, Simon, and Watts[11] discussion of the conceptual frameworks, identified: "social studies in the student centered tradition",

similar to Oliver's "harmonist approach", "social studies as socio-political involvement", an active participation of the student in social and political issues placing emphasis on the analysis of facts and values encouraging the taking of positions. These authors also included "social studies for the sake of knowledge", "social studies as reflective inquiry", and "social studies as the structure of disciplines".

While these previous descriptions have been useful, they contain several weaknesses. First, they have generally differentiated between traditional social studies and the social sciences disciplines approach, not recognizing that both, in practice, have generally been knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Second, none of these analysis have recognized the technological view of social studies curriculum, although it has produced significant developments in materials, teaching strategies, teacher roles, and methodology in general. Third, though inquiry is identified in many analysis, the significance and relation between inquiry and inquiry skills is ignored. And fourth, though socio-political involvement is underlined by some of these analysis, the specific purposes for such involvement is unclear. The current analysis will take a historical view common to some, but not all of the previous descriptions; it is patterned after Barth and Shermis[12] in that it includes reference to purposes, content, and methods of the various philosophies of social studies education. And it uses a system of labelling more consistent with the field of curriculum theory.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the theoretical conceptions present in elementary school social studies. Using the categories

identified by Eisner and Vallance the researcher examined the elementary school social studies literature presented in periodical literature during the last half century. The finings of that study are presented below.

Social Studies as Academic Rationalism

TLe purpose of the knowledge view of social studies is the transmission of the cultural heritage, the inculcation of selected values, and the transmittal of the ideas and values, which, it is believed will, insure the continuance of our social order. Proponents of this conception represent opposing ends of an educational spectrum.

There are those that promote the great histories, literature, and ideas of western man, on the one hand; and those that represent the academic disciplines of the social sciences on the other. (A recent text by Tanner and Tanner[13] presents interesting descriptions of these as well as other conceptual positions). The common assumptions both make are that knowledge alone has value, it need not be applied; and that a knowledgeable person is a good citizen.

According to proponents of the traditional position the content for social studies is history, geography, and aspects of the humanities. Often the actual units of study are drawn from political history and political geography. Civics also enters because of its relevancy to societal needs, a position which seems inconsistent with the philosophy. Although social studies educators are critical of the relevancy of traditional social studies, various state legislatures and current accreditation practices have wed us to elements of this philosophy.

The disciplines oriented group selects its content from the concepts and generalizations of the social sciences. This content has

generally been selected by educators under either approach[14], but during the 60's the content selection became more scientific and a bit less impressionistic than the traditional approach, at least theoretically. The important point is we traded one form of organization, one source of content for another——but for similar purposes——the transmission of knowledge as perceived by a group of authorities. We are transmitting a fixed, previously organized, body of knowledge.

The methods used in communicating this knowledge have been relatively similar. Traditionally, transmission was achieved through descriptive textbooks and teacher persuasion. Although recent reforms promised changed materials, in fact, the same descriptive, expository styles predominate the textual materials of the 70's.[15] Although much foundation and governmental project money was provided for teacher training, many of these workshops preceded the production and adoption of new materials. Much of the resulting research on teaching strategies was implemented after the content revisions had ebbed. The availability of funds did allow us to see alternatives, but the cessation of funding, the rebellion against scientism, and reactions against governmental curriculum planning crippled content and methodological reform. (An authoritative review of social studies in the 60's is presented by Haas[16].)

Social Studies as Cognitive Processes Skill Development

Advocates of this approach believe that the best way to develop worthy family members, good citizens, efficient workers, and individuals of high moral character is to teach them a set of skills with which they

can gather and organize information, draw conclusions, and evaluate these conclusions. The emphasis of this area is the teaching of the processes of decision making--methods of intelligence which include reflective thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving.[17] A recognized position of this group is that present knowledge and values are of little use in a changing universe. Teaching future citizens how to process information will allow them to select from viable alternatives and solve their own problems.[18]

The content of the cognitive processes approach is the data of inquiry drawn from real situations: experience and observation; or from vicarious sources such as newspapers, magazines, references, films, and texts.[19] This data is generally used for decision making or the solution of problems. Content is incidental to the used of the process of inquiry.

The characteristic method of this philosophy is the direct teaching of skills--defined as the ability to do something repeatedly with some degree of expertness.[20] To accomplish such skills the student needs to go through a planned sequence of experiences.[21] One can not assume that children of a given age possess a certain skill unless those skills have been taught in a real context, which assures some transfer. Spodek[20], in a recent article, analyzed social studies materials for four types of intellectual skills: physical, resulting from the child's experience; social, which must be told to children; logical, including classification, and organizational systems which must be taught; and representational, which includes symbols and signs, and interpretive or expressive area which must also be taught. Social studies contains

all four cognitive skill areas. In an analysis of existing social studies materials, Spodek found that the social skills area was well covered, but the examined programs failed to develop the logical skills or the representational area. Some of the materials developed in the 60's Our Working World[21] and the Taba social studies program[22] help children in categorizing and organizing information. Unfortunately most prepared programs remain merely verbal demonstration and illustration; secondary programs included. Although this philosophy of social studies education has existed for many years, elements were present in the discipline centered program, a continuing weakness is that we expect students to inquire without having the prerequisite skills.

Social Studies as Social Reconstruction--Relevancy

Social analysis in social studies represents two views of social studies education, the revisionists and promoters of relevancy.

The revisionist division of this philosophy believes that there is a place in society for visions of a better world and it is the responsibility of the schools to reveal these visions.[23] The schools must carry our civilization forward. Although democratic societies are interested in maintaining their traditions and social conventions, they expect thinking individuals to make changes and decisions which promote a better way of life for individuals of the society.[24]

In developing their content for study, schools have the choice of teaching about democracy through glib, empty generalizations or seeking to promote active follow-through on beliefs and concerns.[25] Proponents of this conception believe that students should study the issues of their society. The purpose of the school is to give children a clear

sense of the direction and the purposes of democracy. Allow students to examine present social patterns; allow conflicts to arise, let students examine the many sources of knowledge, and come up with their own solutions to the conflicts.[26]

The methods of this curriculum are inquiry and decision making, but the goal of this inquiry is to find and promote a better society. Educators are expected to possess a clear conception of the nature of society and are to help the child gain an organized view. Active involvement in the community is encouraged. The revisionist is likely to add the skill of "acting on conclusions" to the list of process skills presented in the previous section.

The relevancy group of the social reconstruction--relevancy conception are interested in assisting the individual in adapting to a world of changing technology and values. The school, to be relevant, must help youth solve the problems that confront him today.

As to content, the social studies must deal with the controversial issues, relating these issues to the child's own experience. We may wish to avoid such issues as teachers because they arose public controversy, but we will deal with them or be damned for the lack of relevancy.[27]

As one of societies basic socializing agencies the school is called upon to help children cope, help them find an identity, a sense of reality, determine purposes, and become socially effective. The methods of this conception consists of aiding the youth to study what is important to him, making the home and school experience at least parallel.[28]

The community is to be a social studies laboratory[29] and there must be emphasis placed on social interaction and interaction skills.[30] The skills are to be the means rather than the ends of instruction, but such skills are individual as opposed to society oriented.

Curriculum as Technology

This philosophy of social studies sees the improvement of curriculum and instruction as its major purpose. Whenever technology is mentioned red flags abound because one thinks of automation and the replacement of people. Actually, as Huber points out,. . "technology is a collection of instruments of and for men. By themselves, the tools have no power; they merely amplify the power of the individuals who use them."[31] Technology is a process as opposed to a content focus. This position sees the methods one uses to arrive at effective curriculum and instruction as the important element. The content of its studies have been: the articulation of the social learnings of children[32], the role of teachers in social studies[33], strategies of teaching[34], and analysis of content.[35]

The means this curricular conception uses to determine answers to its questions have been the analysis of: texts, newspapers and magazines, political platforms, historical background, and descriptions of scholars in its search for the right content for social studies. In an open letter to Johnson, Rugg underlines the methods of the educational technologist " . . They would start new, set up a thorough program of principals, a criteria for subject-matter. They would conduct investigations of social needs as to what ought to be taught. They would establish careful experimental studies of most effective methods of

organizing instructional materials. In short, they would substitute scientific, objective methods for opinionated and empirical ones.[36] Such articles as Macomber[37] on contract teaching and Hunkins and Shapiro[38] on critical thinking shows the continuing impact of this philosophy.

Social Studies as Self-Actualization

The purpose of the self-actualizing curriculum is to create an individual citizen with personal identity and social responsibility. According to this conception, education is a means of providing personally satisfying experiences for individual learners. The needs and interests of the student must be served.[39] The broad goals of the teacher are to help students understand, use, and practice learning in everyday life.[40]

Much of the content of this curriculum focuses on the human problem in problem solving. It differs from the social studies as skills curriculum in that both of the dimensions of a problem are examined--the factual and the emotional aspects. It recognizes that social problems involve the personality structures of individuals.[41] Values are an important aspect of the curriculum, but here the processes are of less concern than the experiencing of situations which bring values into conflict, here individual decisions can be made. Skills, especially critical thinking[42], are the means of solving individual delimmas as opposed to the teaching of skills as an end.

This philosophy of social studies advances learning through group participation in problem solving. But under its methods it is not only the problem which receives attention but also the personalities of the individuals in conflict. "Why do you suppose ____ feels that way?" would be a common question. Although the procedures used in lesson

planning are often very structured, the products or student responses are not. Many lessons are designed in such a way as to allow introspection so that the individual sees and develops his own identity. Many of the value clarification games practiced today are current examples of this philosophy. It would be a mistake to classify all that is done in values or moral education under this philosophy; values teaching is common to all of the conceptions discussed above.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important for social studies educators to understand the purposes of their instruction. Of course our purposes are seldom as clearly delineated as presented here. This paper has attempted to analyze social studies education over the years of its existance as a curriculum area. The author indicates that both the traditional and social science disciplines approach have focused on knowledge for the sake of knowledge. It has been shown, here and elsewhere, that there was a process element in the new social studies, but this was a secondary focus.

Content has received abundant attention in social studies. It has dominated the field, yet the processes of knowing remain. In the skills conception there is also the underlying insistance on sequences and prerequisites, an issue social studies educators seem unwilling or unable to face. Perhaps it is the same issue that has allowed us to ignore the long history of the technological view of curriculum in the previous analyses of the conceptions of social studies education. We liberally use the methods of this conception but fail to legitimize its presence.

Socio-political involvement are also revealed in the present analysis. It is by no means ignored in other descriptions, but its purposes seem underplayed. We continually see articles in Social Education and Educational Leadership pleading for the discussion of controversial issues, yet we seem oblivious to the intention for which we focus on such issues. Is it merely for description? In this study it becomes clear that two other goals could be addressed, one has a society focus; the other a child focus with a technological society view.

The self-awareness curriculum is also a cause of confusion. It has often been labelled the child centered curriculum, which is not a curriculum, but a focus shared by several curricular conceptions. The relevancy view of the social analysis curriculum, for example, is child centered. If one is to expose children to values, what conception of curriculum would serve best? Should the student's attention be focused on the present values of society; the values that have served our civilization; or should we focus on the values which would make our society stronger--by what criteria?

The purpose of this study was to determine the theoretical conceptions of elementary social studies education. Of course, the basic assumption of the study was that these conceptions were unknown. Extensive analysis showed some attempts to form conceptions: two areas academic rationalism and cognitive processes are easily revealed. The areas of self-awareness, curriculum as technology, and social analysis are less identifiable. The reason for this lack of identification possibly comes the difference in training of three types of practitioners: elementary trained individuals with an extensive training in pedagogy,

secondary trained people with less training in pedagogy and more in the academic subjects, and persons trained in the areas of arts and sciences with little or no pedadogical training. All three of these types of individuals contribute to the theoretical literature in social studies. It must be realized of course, due to the number of differences among institutions there may be significant differences within the groups as among them. This leads to the first recommendation. A study should be initiated which determines whether there is a significant difference in philosophy between or among their three groups of professionals represented in the field of social studies education.

A second area of concern uncovered in this study is the inconsistency of terminology making discussion of the purposes or goals of social studies incomprehensible to social studies education and curriculum specialists in general. Each participant seems to invent his own descriptive terms for the categories, failing to refer to the literature in the field of curriculum theory. The reason for neglect of theory is possibly based on the fact that these authors again represent diverse backgrounds with little or no foundational background in the area of curriculum. The second recommendation is that this weakness should be called to the attention of professionals in the field through the journal of Social Education and the 1978 national conference in Houston. In addition a proposal for a bulletin making connection between the labels existing and the theories of curriculum could be presented to the publication board of the National Council for the Social Studies.

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